

Legends and Stories

Objectives

Students will (1) explore oral tradition through story, (2) use facts, knowledge and understanding of natural resources to creatively shape a solution to a natural resource problem.

Curricular Areas

Science, History, and Language Arts

California Content Standards

Science

3rd Life Science 3 a, b, c, d, e

4th Life Science 2 a, b, c, 3a, b, c, d; Earth Science 5 c

5th Life Science 2 a, b, c, d, e, f, g; Earth Science 3, d, e

6th Ecology 5 a, b, c, d, e; Resources 6b

7th Evolution 3 a, e; Earth 4 e, g

Social Studies

3rd 3.1, 3.2, 3.3

4th 4.2, 4.4

5th 5.1, 5.4

Language Arts

3rd Reading 1.0, 2.0, 3.0; Writing 1.0, 2.0; Written/Oral 1.0; Listen/Speak 1.0, 2.0

4th Reading 1.0, 2.0, 3.0; Writing 1.0, 2.0; Written/Oral 1.0; Listen/Speak 1.0, 2.0

5th Reading 1.0, 2.0, 3.0; Writing 1.0, 2.0; Written/Oral 1.0; Listen/Speak 1.0, 2.0

6th Reading 1.0, 2.0, 3.0; Writing 1.0, 2.0; Written/Oral; 1.0; Listen/Speak 1.0, 2.0

7th Reading 1.0, 2.0, 3.0; Writing 1.0, 2.0; Written/Oral 1.0; Listen/Speak 1.0, 2.0

8th Reading 1.0, 2.0, 3.0; Writing 1.0, 2.0, 3.0; Written/Oral 1.0; Listen/Speak 1.0, 2.0

Method

Students will create a story about the future using what they have learned about watersheds and salmon.

They will develop this story into a “Readers’ Theater” format.

Materials

- Microphone and recorder (or simulated ones)
- Stools for the readers
- Copies of the *Readers’ Theater* example
- Copy of *The Creation*

Background

Before the coming of European settlers, there were many different Indian tribes in California. In contrast to the Great Plains and the Southwestern Desert, Native Americans densely populated the areas in this part of the continent because of the abundance of natural resources. California tribes were grouped in larger units by language and culture. The type of environment in which each group lived generally determined cultural grouping. The cultural group of the Valley Nisenan (the Central Valley) was of the Penutian language group. They were part of the Maidu tribe and occupied territory in Central California from the high Sierra to the valley plain. Native groupings followed large waterways. For example, the Nisenan built their villages on the Notoman or East Water (American River). They lived in the valley bordered

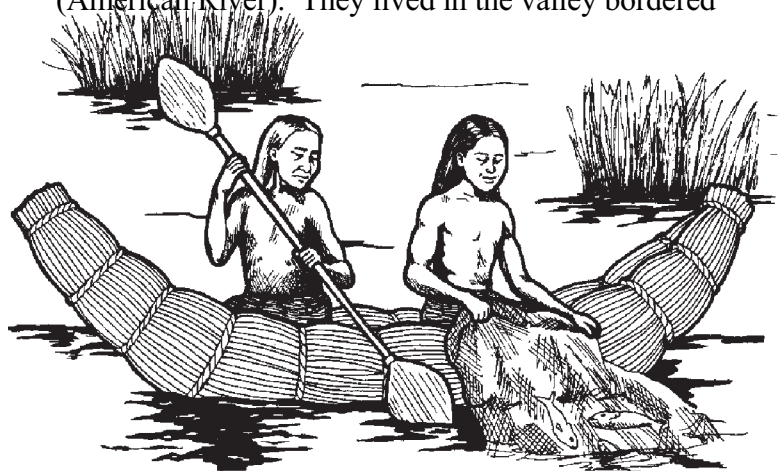


Illustration by Robyn Patton from *Ooti, A Child of the Nisenan*.



by the Sacramento, Bear and American Rivers. The Interior Miwok group occupied the land of the southern portion of the Sacramento Valley and northern portion of the San Joaquin Valley.

The land of the Great Valley was one of the richest habitats in California with its rivers, vast areas of grassland, fair quantities of variable woodland, and chaparral. The woodland provided deer, vegetables and the staple acorns; the grasslands provided antelope; the rivers provided salmon, and other fish and the large gallery forests along the riparian corridors provided more acorns. Fishing was important. Salmon, sturgeon and lampreys were taken, primarily in net, and often in conjunction with reed rafts or boats made of tules. The fish were usually roasted and eaten. However, much of the salmon was dried and stored to used throughout the year.

For tribes in the northwestern part of California, the rivers were especially important. Many northwestern tribes considered the rivers central to their existence. Salmon was a large portion of the diet of the peoples of the Klamath and Trinity rivers. As a consequence, ceremonies to ensure the bounty of the salmon were of great importance. These tribes' life cycles, religions and wars focused on the rivers, particularly the salmon of those rivers. The tribes of the central valley were provided with the abundance of game, fish, and plants with seasonal variations. Although salmon was a very important food, there is no documentation of salmon ceremonies for the Nisenan people.

Procedure

1. Native American story telling was important in passing oral tradition from one generation

to the next. Stories were told by the shaman (spiritual doctor). He called upon the spirits for good crops and hunts. The shaman used animal people as story characters. One of the favorite characters is Coyote, the greatest of the animal people. Coyote is known as the trickster. He can be good or mischievous.

2. To help students learn about the Native American style of story telling, read *The Creation* story.
3. Next, introduce the students to the concept of a Readers' Theater. In Readers' Theater, students are assigned reading parts from a written script. The parts are read rather than memorized. Students sit on stools or stand in front of the class to do this. A microphone can be used as if the story is being broadcast over the radio. Explain that students will be writing their own original Readers' Theater script.
4. To help students understand a Readers' Theater, have them participate in one by using the following example. The class might want to include sound effects and possibly record the reading.
5. Ask students to create an original story about the American River, how it became polluted, and the health of the watershed to be restored. Ask students to use what they have learned about salmon and watersheds to guide their imagination.
 - The story can involve spirits, animals or plants, natural or human-made objects, or ordinary people. Encourage students to use their creative talents.
 - Once the story line is developed, students should write it for the Readers' Theater, using a narrator and any characters they wish.
6. Hold a Readers' Theater.

Extension

1. Have students make masks or other props to

Reader's Theater

Why the Salmon Return Each Year

Characters:

Narrator
Raven
The Fog Princess
Raven's Friend

dip my fingers into it.

Gitsanuk: Look, a golden fish. I shall build a fire.

Raven: Yes, we must cook it at once.

Narrator: Raven liked to eat fish. But, in order to eat fish he must first catch them. On this day, Raven is fishing in his canoe with this friend, Gitsanuk.

Raven: Look at this, Gitsanuk. Another Bullhead! More bones to choke on! With all the water in this stream, one would hope for better fish.

Gitsanuk: Look Raven! The fog approaches quickly. We should head for shore.

Raven: It is too late. I can not see to guide the canoe. The fog surrounds us.

Fog Princess: Do not be afraid. I will see you safely to shore.

Raven: Who are you? How did you get in our canoe?

Fog Princess: Give me your hat.

Narrator: Raven and Gitsanuk watched in amazement as the Fog Princess (for that is who she was) gathered all the fog in Raven's hat. When the fog was all contained, the sun shone again and Raven beached the canoe safely.

Raven: You have saved us with your magical powers. There is no one as good or beautiful as you. Will you stay with us and be my wife?

Fog Princess: Yes, Raven. I will be your wife and my wedding gift to you shall be a new fish so delicious that you have never tasted another like it. Gitsanuk, bring a bucket of water. Now watch as I

Gitsanuk: See how well the new fish roasts. The smell is truly wonderful.

Raven: And the taste is more wonderful still. Wife bring us more of these fish.

Fog Princess: Your hunger is now cared for. I can not produce that which is not needed.

Raven: I said I want more fish! Unless you produce them at once, I shall be angry at you!

Narrator: Just then, where the day had been still, a wind rose and shook the leaves from the trees. Raven and Gitsanuk were soon so covered with leaves that they could not see. Then, as quickly as it had begun, the wind stopped and the leaves floated to the ground. When Raven looked up, he saw that the Fog Princess had gone.

Gitsanuk: Raven, look to sea. The fog disappears there and the Princess with it. There, she is gone! Your selfishness has cost you dearly.

Narrator: And Raven hung his head in shame. But as we know, a wonderful thing did happen! Even today, the salmon return to the Indians' streams once each year and it is said that the Fog Princess brings them... just enough each year to keep the tribe from hunger.

The Creation

In the beginning there was no sun, no moon, no stars. All was dark, and everywhere there was only water. A raft came floating on the water. It came from the north, and in it were only two persons--Turtle and Peheipe, the clown. The stream flowed very rapidly. Then, from the sky a rope of feathers, called Pokelma, was let down, and down it came Earth Maker. When he reached the end of the rope, he tied it to the bow of the raft and stepped in. His face was covered and was never seen, but his body shone like the sun.

At last Turtle said, "Where do you come from?" And Earth Maker answered, "I come from above." Then Turtle said, "Brother, can you make for me some good dry land, so that I may sometimes come up out of the water?" Then he asked another time, "Are there going to be any people in the world?" Earth Maker thought awhile, and then said, "Yes." Turtle asked, "How long before you are going to make people?" Earth Maker replied, "I don't know. You want to have some dry land. Well how am I going to get any earth to make it?" Turtle answered, "If you will tie a rock around my left arm, I'll dive for some." Earth Maker did as Turtle asked, and then reaching around, took the end of a rope from somewhere, and tied it to Turtle. When Earth Maker came to the raft, there was no rope there, he just reached out and found one. Turtle said, "If the rope is not long enough, I'll jerk it once, and you must haul me up; if it is long enough, I'll give two jerks, and then you must pull me up quickly, as I shall have all the earth that I can carry." Just as Turtle went over the side of the boat, Peheipe began to shout loudly, wondering what would happen to him.

Turtle was gone a long time. He was gone six years, and when he came up he was covered with green slime, he had been down so long. When he reached the top of the water, the only earth he had was a very little under his nails, the rest had washed away. Earth Maker took with his right hand a stone knife from under his left armpit and carefully scraped the earth out from under Turtle's nails. He put the earth in the palm of his hand and rolled it about until it was round. It was as large as a small pebble. He laid it on the stern of the raft. By and by he went to look at it. It had grown so that it could not be spanned by the arms. The fourth time he looked, it was as big as the world, the raft was aground, and all around were mountains as far as he could see. The raft came ashore at Todoiko, and the place can be seen today.

This is the story as remembered and told by a Maidu